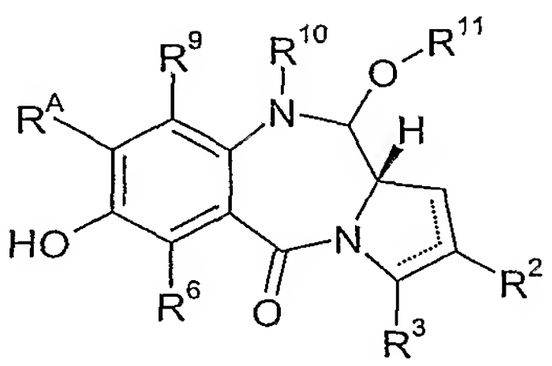
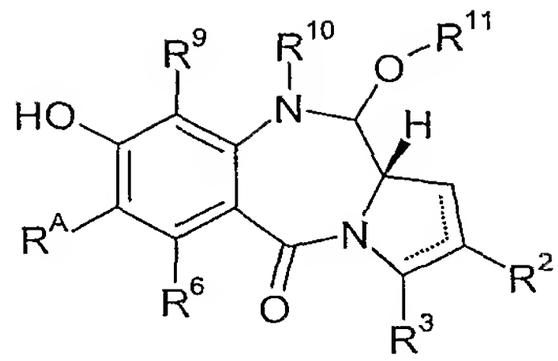
CLAIMS

1. A compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib**:



Ia



Ib

and salts, solvates, and chemically protected forms thereof,

wherein:

the dotted lines indicate the optional presence of a double bond between C1 and C2 or C2 and C3;

R^2 and R^3 are independently selected from -H, =O, $=CH_2$, -CN, -R, OR, halo, =CH-R, $O-SO_2-R$, CO_2R and COR;

R^6 and R^9 are independently selected from H, R, OH, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR', nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

where R and R' are independently selected from optionally substituted C_{1-12} alkyl, C_{3-20} heterocyclyl and C_{5-20} aryl groups;

R^A is selected from H, R, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR', nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

R^{10} is a carbamate-based nitrogen protecting group; and

R^{11} is an oxygen protecting group.

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein R^A is independently selected from H, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR' and halo.

3. A compound according to either claim 1 or claim 2, wherein R^{11} is THP or a silyl oxygen protecting group.

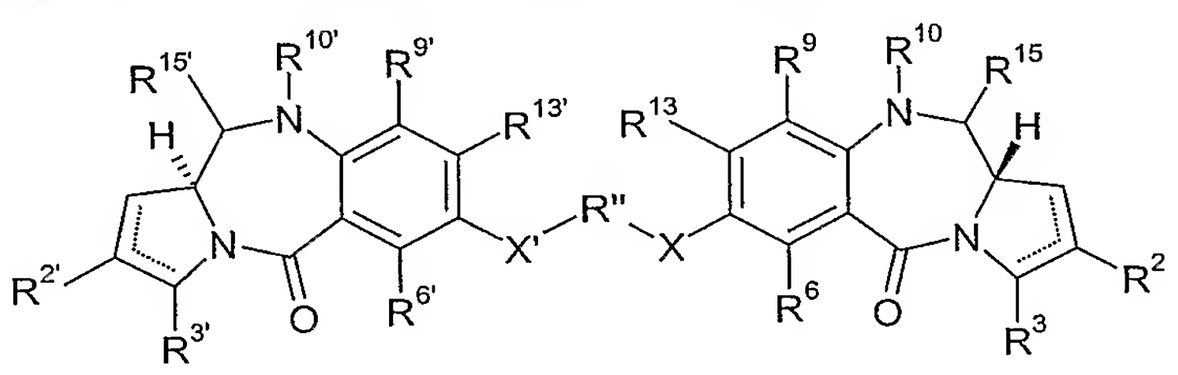
4. A compound according to any of the preceding claims, wherein R^{10} is BOC or Troc.

5. A compound according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein R^9 is H.

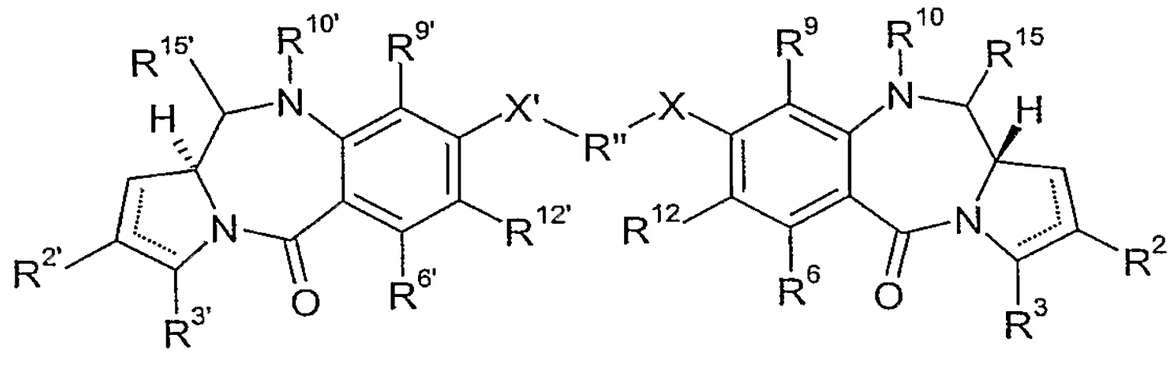
6. A compound according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein R^2 is R.

7. A compound according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein R^6 is selected from H, OH, OR, SH, NH_2, nitro and halo.

8. A compound of formula **IIIa** or **IIIb**:



IIIa



IIIb

and salts and thereof, wherein:

the dotted lines indicate the optional presence of a double bond between C1 and C2 or C2 and C3;

R^2 and R^3 are independently selected from -H, =O, $=CH_2$, -CN, -R, OR, halo, =CH-R, $O-SO_2-R$, CO_2R and COR;

R^6, R^9, R^{12} and R^{13} are independently selected from H, R, OH, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR', nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

where R and R' are independently selected from optionally substituted C_{1-12} alkyl, C_{3-20} heterocyclyl and C_{5-20} aryl groups;

R^{10} is a carbamate-based nitrogen protecting group and R^{15} is either $O-R^{11}$, wherein R^{11} is an oxygen protecting group, or OH, or R^{10} and R^{15} together form a double bond between N10 and C11; and

where R″ is a C_{3-12} alkylene group, which chain may be interrupted by one or more heteroatoms, e.g. O, S, NH, and/or aromatic rings, and each X is independently selected from O, S, or NH; and $R^{2'}$, $R^{3'}$, $R^{6'}$, $R^{9'}$, $R^{10'}$, $R^{12'}$, $R^{13'}$ and $R^{15'}$ are all independently selected from the same lists as previously defined for R^2, R^3, R^6, R^9, R^{10}, R^{12}, R^{13} and R^{15} respectively.

9. A compound according to claim 8, wherein the dimers are linked at the C8 position.

10. A compound according to claim 8, wherein the dimers are linked at the C7 position.

11. A compound according to either claim 9 or claim 10, wherein X′-R″-X- of formula **IIIa** or **IIIb** is $-O-(CH_2)_n-O-$, where n is 3 to 12.

12. A compound according to claim 11, wherein n is 8 to 12.

13. A compound according to claim 12, wherein n is 8 to 11.

14 A compound according to claim 13, wherein n is 8 to 10.

15. A compound according to claim 14, wherein n is 8 or 9.

16. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 15, wherein R^{15} is $O-R^{11}$ and R^{11} is THP or a silyl oxygen protecting group.

17. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 16, wherein R^{10} is BOC or Troc.

18. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 15, wherein R^{10} and R^{15} together form a double bond between N10 and C11.

19. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 18, wherein R^9 is H.

20. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 19, wherein R^2 is R.

21. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 20, wherein R^6 is selected from H, OH, OR, SH, NH_2, nitro and halo.

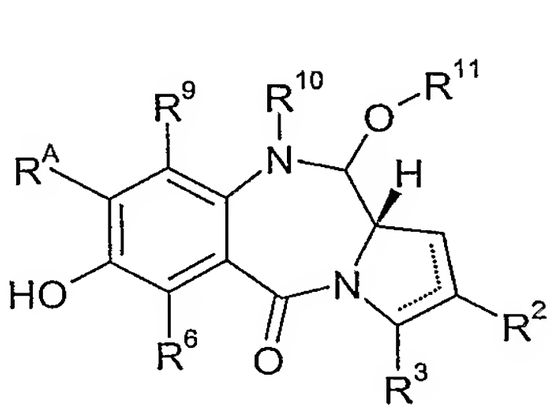
22. A compound according to any one of claims 8 to 21 for use in a method of therapy.

23. A pharmaceutical composition containing a compound of any one of claims 8 to 21, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

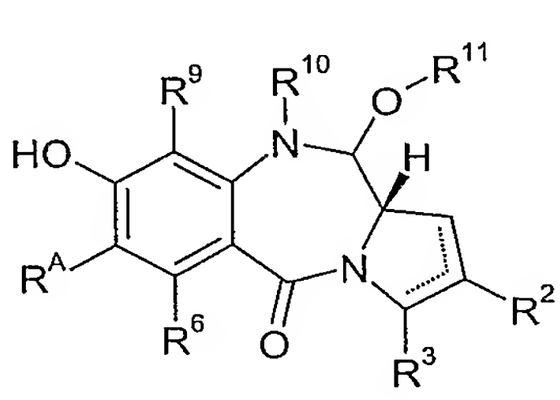
24. Use of a compound according to any one of claims 8 to 21 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating a proliferative disease.

25. A method of treatment of a proliferative disease, comprising administering to a subject in need of treatment a therapeutically-effective amount of a compound of any one of claims 8 to 21.

26. A method of synthesising a compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib**:

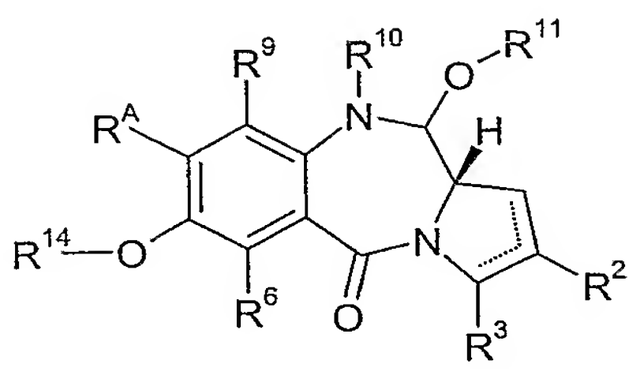


Ia

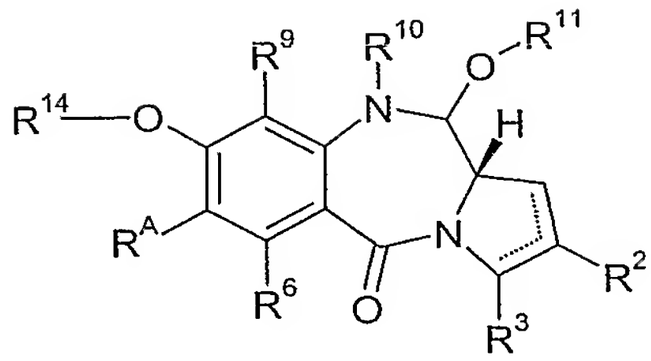


Ib

from a compound of formula **IIa** or **IIb** respectively:



IIa



IIb

wherein:

the dotted lines indicate the optional presence of a double bond between C1 and C2 or C2 and C3;

R^2 and R^3 are independently selected from -H, =O, $=CH_2$, -CN, -R, OR, halo, =CH-R, $O-SO_2-R$, CO_2R and COR;

R^6 and R^9 are independently selected from H, R, OH, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR', nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

where R and R' are independently selected from optionally substituted C_{1-12} alkyl, C_{3-20} heterocyclyl and C_{5-20} aryl groups;

R^A is selected from H, R, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR', nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

R^{10} is a carbamate-based nitrogen protecting group;

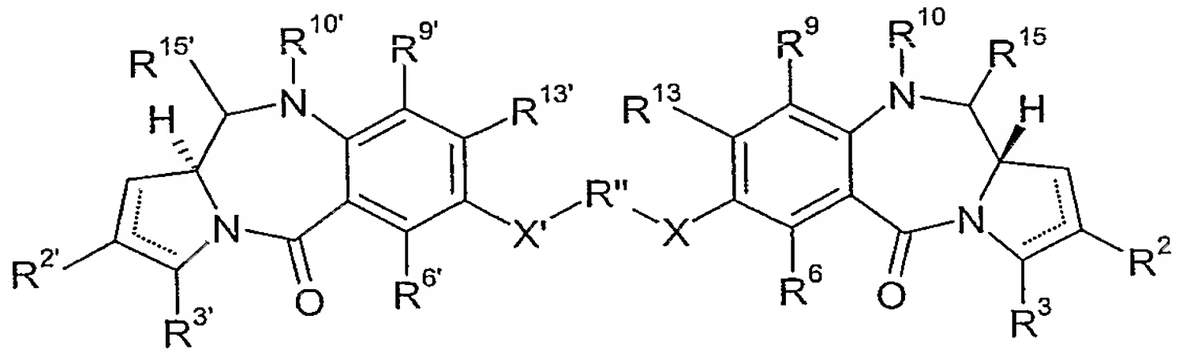
R^{11} is an oxygen protecting group; and

R^{14} is an oxygen protecting group orthogonal to R^{11}.

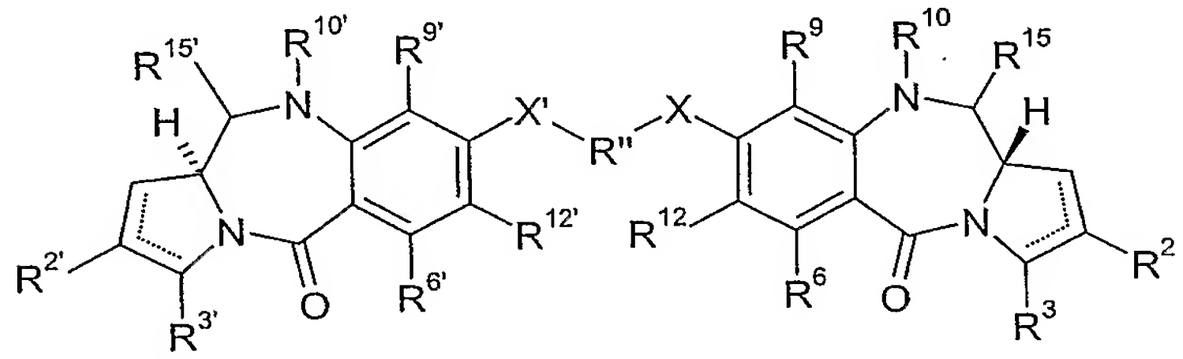
27. A method according to claim 26, wherein R^{14} is benzyl ether and R^A is OMe or H.

28. A method according to either claim 26 or claim 27, wherein R^{11} is THP or a silyl oxygen protecting group.

29. A method of synthesising a compound of formula **IIIa** or **IIIb**:

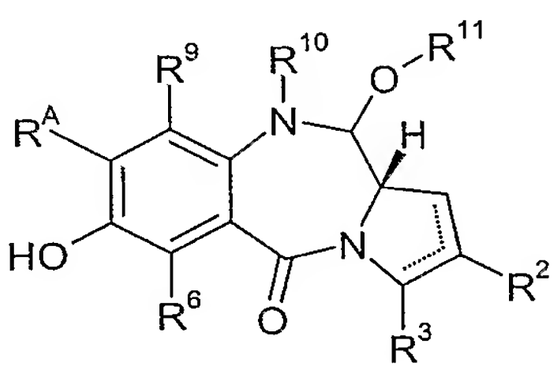


IIIa

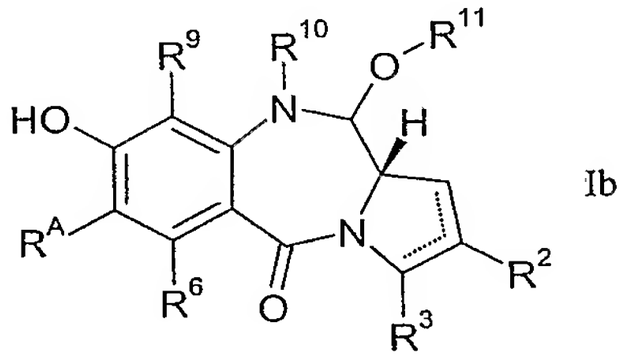


IIIb

or a solvate thereof, from a compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib** respectively:



Ia



Ib

wherein:

the dotted lines indicate the optional presence of a double bond between C1 and C2 or C2 and C3;

R^2 and R^3 are independently selected from -H, =O, $=CH_2$, -CN, -R, OR, halo, =CH-R, $O-SO_2-R$, CO_2R and COR;

R^6, R^9, R^{12} and R^{13} are independently selected from H, R, OH, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR′, nitro, Me_3Sn and halo; where R and R′ are independently selected from optionally substituted C_{1-12} alkyl, C_{3-20} heterocyclyl and C_{5-20} aryl groups;

R^A is selected from H, R, OR, SH, SR, NH_2, NHR, NRR′, nitro, Me_3Sn and halo;

R^{10} is a carbamate-based nitrogen protecting group and R^{15} is either $O-R^{11}$, wherein R^{11} is an oxygen protecting group, or OH, or R^{10} and R^{15} together form a double bond between N10 and C11; and

where R″ is a C_{3-12} alkylene group, and each X is independently selected from O, S, or NH; and

$R^{2'}$, $R^{3'}$, $R^{6'}$, $R^{9'}$, $R^{10'}$, $R^{12'}$, $R^{13'}$ and $R^{15'}$ are all independently selected from the same lists as previously defined for R^2, R^3, R^6, R^9, R^{10}, R^{12}, R^{13} and R^{15} respectively.

30. A method according to claim 29, comprising the step of either:

(a) reacting a compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib** with a compound having the formula Y-R"-Y' to yield a compound of formula **IIIa** or **IIIb**; or

(b) (i) reacting a compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib** with a compound having the formula Y-R"-YProt, and

(ii) converting YProt in the reaction product from (i) to Y', and

(iii) reacting the product from (ii) with a compound of formula **Ia** or **Ib** to yield a compound of formula **IIIa** or **IIIb**;

wherein:

Y, Y' are independently selected from OH, I, Br, Cl, mesylate or tosylate;

YProt is a precursor to Y' or a chemically protected form of Y' having a protecting group that is orthogonal to R^{10} and R^{11}.

31. A method according to claim 30, wherein Y and Y' are I.

32. A method according to claim 30, wherein Y is OH and YProt is O-benzyl.